



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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### Glossary of Massachusetts Legislative Terms

Compiled by the Legislative Reference Staff of the State  
Library of Massachusetts

N.B. All terms in **Bold Print** have their own entry.

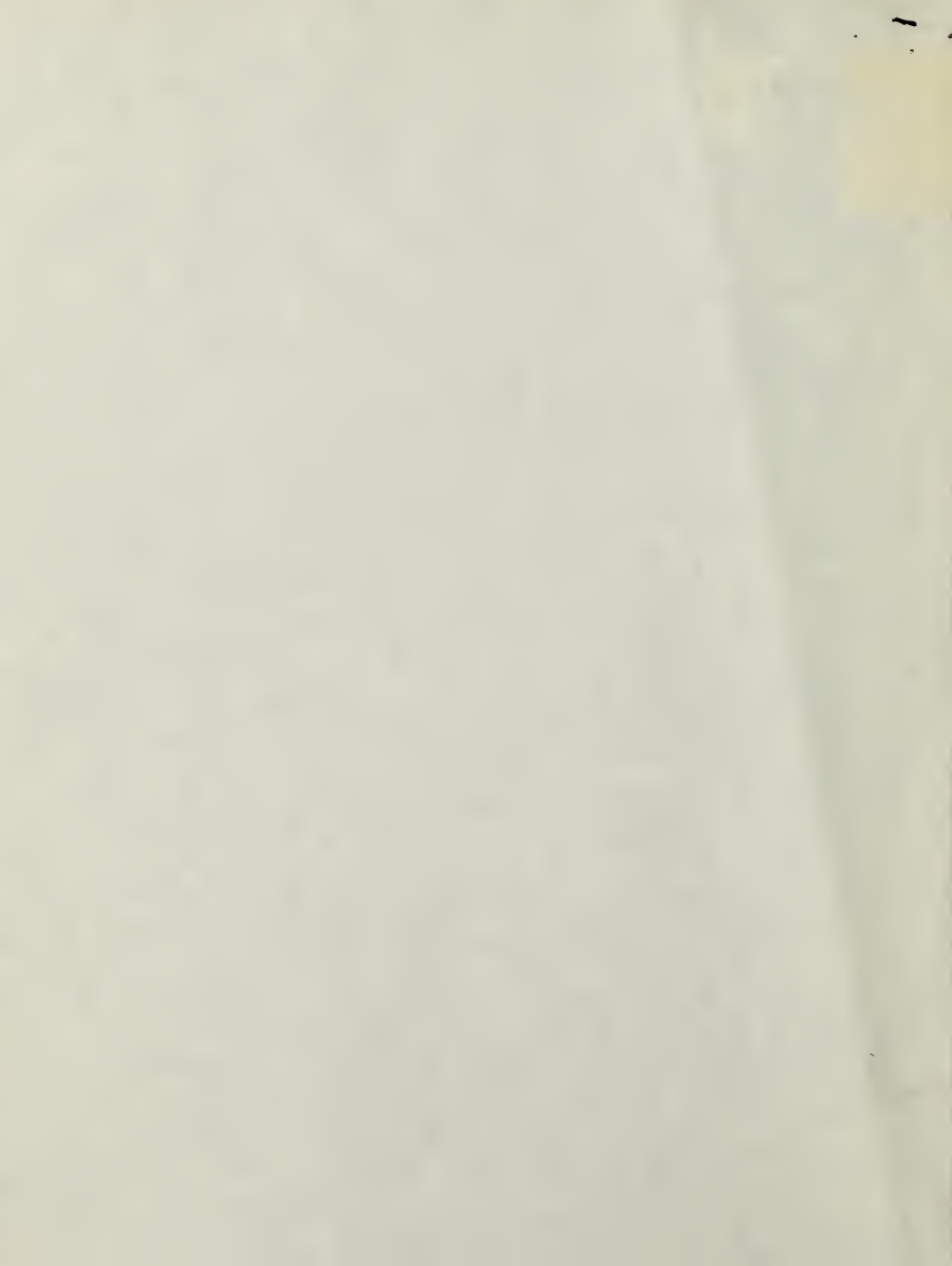
**After Vote** : (AV) The House allows five minutes after a Roll Call **Vote** is taken for a Representative to add his/her vote. This after vote is not counted in the official tally, but is recorded as an AV in the printed **Yeas and Nays**. (See also Roll Call Vote and Yeas and Nays)

**Amendment** : Change, addition or deletion in the wording of a Bill under consideration either in **Committee** or in **Chamber**. (See also Committee, Chamber, Second Reading and Third Reading)

**Approved by the Governor** : The signature of the Governor on an engrossed enacted Bill. The Bill becomes law in ninety days unless there is an **Emergency Preamble**. (See also Emergency Preamble)

**Bill** : Document which proposes a change in existing statutes and/or introduces a new statute. The bill accompanies the **Petition**. Bills are bound in the **Legislative Documents** volumes in the State Library. (See also Petition and Legislative Documents)

**By request** : This phrase, found after the name of a legislator in the sponsor section on the top of a printed Bill, indicates that the legislator does not endorse the Bill which s/he introduced as the result of the right of **Free Petition**. (See also Free Petition)



**Calendar** : Also called the **Orders of the Day** (O.D.), the calendar is the daily agenda of the House and Senate. (See also **Orders of the Day**)

**Chambers** : The two meeting places of the House and Senate where the formal business of the day is conducted. Chamber galleries are open to the public.

**Committee** : Consists of members of the House and Senate (Joint Committees) or House or Senate members only (Standing Committees). Joint committees study and research Bills under their consideration, hold public hearings and report on Bills. (See also **Committee Report**)

**Committee report** : The report is not a written document but the recommendation of a **Committee** that a bill ought to pass (OTP), ought not to pass (ONTP), or ought to pass with an amendment (OTPWA). (See also **Committee**)

**Conference Committee** : A small special committee appointed by the leadership to iron out differences between the House and Senate versions of a Bill. Three members of each branch make up the committee. Their report must either be accepted or rejected, it cannot be amended.

**Emergency Preamble** : Means by which a Bill becomes a law upon the signature of the governor instead of the usual ninety day waiting period. (See also **Approved by the Governor**)

**Enactment** : Final approval of an **Engrossed Bill** by both branches. Enacted Bills are sent to the Governor by the Senate. (See also **Engrossment**)

**Engrossment** : (Eng.) After passage by both branches the Bill is passed to be engrossed. Engrossment is the procedure whereby the Bill is typed in simulated script on special paper in the Engrossing Division. The engrossed Bill is voted upon for enactment. (See also **Enactment**)

**Filing Date**: **Petitions** and their accompanying **Bills** or **Resolves** for the next session must be filed with the Clerk of the House or Senate on or before the first Wednesday in November in non - election years (odd numbered years), and on or before the first Wednesday in December during election years (even - numbered years). (See also **Late Filed Bills**)

**First Reading** : This is the first of three mandatory readings in each branch of the **General Court**. This reading is the account of the **Committee Report** delivered by the Clerk of the House or Senate. (See also **Second Reading** and **Third Reading**)



**Free petition :** In Massachusetts all citizens have the right to petition the state legislature. This procedure is called the right of free petition. A citizen drafts and files a **Petition** and accompanying **Bill**. A legislator sponsors the **Bill** in the **General Court**. If a legislator disagrees with the contents of the **Bill**, he/she may indicate this by placing the phrase **By request** after his /her name. ( See also **Petition** and **Bill**)

**General Court :** The official name for the Massachusetts legislature, usually used when referring to both branches. It is also sometimes called the **Great and General Court**.

**Governor's Message :** The manner in which the Governor may introduce his/her proposals for legislation. The message is written in letter format to the **General Court**, and the **Bill** accompanies the message. These documents are assigned one **Bill** number and are also contained within the **Bills** in the **Legislative Document** volumes in the State Library. (See also **Legislative Documents** , **Bills** and **General Court**)

**Journals :** The **Journals** of the House and **Journals** of the Senate are the official account of the daily sessions of the **General Court**. The **Journals** contain the procedural information of the process of legislative events. The **Journals** do not contain debate. (See also **General Court**)

**Late Filed Bill :** A **Bill** which is filed after the **Filing Date** with the Clerk of the House or Senate, and approved by 4/5 of the members of the branch where the bill is introduced. (See also **Filing Date**)

**Legislative Documents:** The bound volumes of the **Bills**, **Resolves**, **Governor's Messages**, and other legislative documents. (See also **Bills**, **Resolves** and **Governor's Messages**)

**Negatived :** The rejection by the members of the **General Court** of a motion by a negative vote. (See also **General Court** and **Roll Call Vote**)

**Paired votes :** Two Senators may combine or pair a negative vote with a positive vote, and therefore cancel each other out. One Senator must be present for the actual vote, and paired votes are not counted as part of the official tally. (See also **Yeas and Nays** and **Roll Call Vote**)

**Petition :** Formal document to request consideration of a proposal to the legislature. The proposal, usually a **Bill** or a **Resolve** , accompanies the petition. (See also **Bill** and **Resolve**)



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**Pocket Veto** : If, after the **General Court** has **Prorogued** the Governor fails to sign any **Enacted Bills** or **Resolves** on his/her desk within ten days they do not become law. This lack of signature by the Governor is called a pocket veto. (See also **Enactment** and **Prorogation**)

**Prevailed** : The acceptance of a motion by the members of the **General Court** by a positive vote. (See also **General Court** and **Roll Call Vote**)

**Prorogation** : The formal adjournment of the yearly session of the legislature by the Governor. If the **General Court** is not prorogued before the first Wednesday of January (the first day of the new session) the ending session is automatically dissolved at midnight on the Tuesday before the first Wednesday of January.

**Public hearings** : Forum for discussion and testimony by the public to the **Committee** which is considering a **Bill**. No transcripts of hearings are kept. (See also **Committee**)

**Quorum** : The number of members needed to conduct the sessions. A **Roll Call Vote** may be called if there is a request to determine if a quorum is present. (See also **Roll Call Vote**)

**Redraft** : New version of a **Bill** which shows substantial changes. Redrafts have different **Bill** numbers from the original **Bill**. (See also **Reprint**)

**Reprint** : Corrected copy of a **Bill** which shows the changes in a **Bill** which are of an editorial nature. Corrected reprints have the same **Bill** number as the original. (See also **Redraft**)

**Reporting Date** : The date, the last Wednesday in April, on which all **Bills** must be reported out of joint **Committees**. This rule may be suspended to extend the reporting date. (See also **Suspension of Rules**)

**Resolve** : A document which requests an action of a less general nature than a **Bill**, such as the creation of a special commission. **Petition** must accompany the resolve, as with a **Bill**. (See also **Petition** and **Bill**)

**Resolution** : Statement of the House or Senate or both branches together on a particular topic or event of concern to them. The titles of resolutions are found in the **Journals** (See also **Journals**)





**Roll Call Vote** : A recorded vote of the House or Senate, also called **Yeas and Nays**. All other votes are unrecorded voice votes. (See also **Yeas and Nays**)

**Second reading** : At this time the floor of the chamber is opened for discussion and debate on the merits of a Bill. **Amendments** frequently occur during this time. A favorable vote is needed to send the bill to its **Third Reading**. (See also **First Reading** and **Third Reading**)

**Study Order** : Means by which **Bills** are sent back to the joint **Committees** for further investigation and study. (See also **Bill** and **Committee**)

**Suspension of Rules** : The procedural rules of the House and Senate may be suspended by the members in order to expedite the daily business.

**Third reading** : After a vote of approval for the Bill's second reading it is sent to the Bills in Third Reading Committee to be reviewed. This **Committee** checks the contents of the Bill for legal technicalities and proper citations. After the Bill is released by the Bills in Third Reading Committee it is read for the third and final time in **Chamber** where it may again be debated and **Amended**. (See also **First Reading** and **Second Reading**)

**Yeas and Nays** : The **Roll Call Votes** of the members of the House and Senate. **Roll Calls** for the Senate are found in the **Journals** of the Senate on the day on which the vote was taken. **Roll Calls** of the House are assigned a Yea and Nay Supplement number and are printed separately. When the bound volumes of the House **Journals** are printed the Yeas and Nays are included in the last volume at the end of the book. (See also **Journals** and **Roll Call Vote**)

